

In memory of David Macbride

My colleague and friend David Macbride died suddenly in his sleep on September 7, 2018, at the very start of classes at the Hartt School, where we both taught. We had known each other since Fall 1984, the date we both arrived as novice faculty members. No one expected this. David was a strong, often quiet presence that grounded our community with his devotion to students, the sacrament of performance, and the mandate to write music that demanded attention because of its sincerity, craft, and essential economy.

This work was written in a rush of energy and disorienting despair in fall 2018. The first movement channels that state, as well as being an evocation of being suddenly whisked from life before one would be properly aware of it. The middle movement was written first, then the outer fragmentary movements were added to build it outwards from either end. The piece reflects on David's creative persona in several ways:

--David loved the music of Cage. Thus the second and fourth movements are each extremely spare, surrounded by silence. Their timings, 43" and 33" bear a reference to the seminal 4'33". A percussive sound in the fourth also makes a subtle reference to David's love and mastery of percussion writing.

--He also loved Morton Feldman (I do too), and this influence is clear throughout the piece, but especially in the third movement.

--And he played the viola. A cadenza for the instrument is featured in the center of the third movement.

--Above all, David was a musician who believed in his ear and his gut. I think that I, one who often loves to explore architectures that to me feel mystical, probably amused him with what he might have felt was incipient grandiosity. In respect to his values, this piece was written with almost none of the advance planning and exploration that usually prepares a work of mine. Instead, I allowed David to look over my shoulder and at times gently correct me if I got out of hand. He was saying:

Just listen.

---Robert Carl

Instrumentation: Violin, Viola, 'Cello, Piano (*bass drum beater for low strings or optional small gong in movement 4)*

Timing: 1: 45"

2: 43"

3. 10'

4. 33"

5. 3'

Total: c.15'